

Eleven killed in latest Ecuador bus crash

AFP, Quito

A bus crash in Ecuador's Andes mountains left 11 people dead, authorities said Saturday, bringing the country's death toll from such accidents to 46 in the past three weeks.

The bus was traveling toward Loja, in southern Ecuador, when it crashed 21 kilometers (13 miles) south of the city of Cuenca.

"There are a total of 37 injured and 11 dead reported in this morning's accident," the health ministry's regional office said on Twitter.

Images posted on Twitter by the Cuenca fire department showed the bus overturned on its side.

On August 14, a Colombian bus carrying 40 passengers crashed on the outskirts of Ecuador's capital Quito, killing 23 people, among them Colombians and Venezuelans.



A bus crash in Ecuador's Andes mountains leaves 11 people dead. Authorities said this brought the country's death toll from such accidents to 45 in the past three weeks.

PHOTO: AFP

Negligence

FROM PAGE 1

of the broken barrier but decided to wait until yesterday morning before informing higher officials.

Sunimal Chakma, 55, died when the Khagrachhari-bound bus was hit by Chittagong-bound Bijoy Express train at Baryarhat Rail Crossing in Chittagong's Mirsharai around 4:00am yesterday.

Moinul Huda Majumdar, senior station master of Chinki station, said he knew about the barrier at the crossing but did not want to contact the higher authorities concerned at night.

"We were supposed to contact the divisional transportation officer in the morning. But the accident has happened ... We did not think it would," he told The Daily Star.

Mohammad Arif, in-charge of operating barriers at the crossing, said one of the barriers went out of order on Saturday afternoon.

He added that he was closing the working bar at the time of the crash.

Asked, Firoz Iftekhhar, divisional transportation officer, said he was not informed of the matter.

"A probe committee has been formed," he said.

Meanwhile, two passengers of the bus, Diba Rani Chakma and her husband Pushpeswar Chakma of Khagrachhari, were seen writhing in pain at Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

Diba had multiple cuts on her body while Pushpeswar's right leg was broken.

They were trapped in the mangled vehicle until locals and firefighters arrived and rescued them.

Most of the passengers were asleep at the time of the crash, said Milton Tripathy, another injured at the hospital.

Mirsharai Fire Station Inspector Rabiul Azam said, "Three fire engines rushed to the scene and rescued the injured with the help of locals. Some 15 were sent to CMCH."

He added that train movement was halted for over two hours.

Draft made

FROM PAGE 16

Alam added that they had sent the list of the projects to the WB and its experts reviewed and endorsed them.

He also said Bangladesh had been experiencing the adverse impact of climate change. Every year, 50,000 families become landless due to the adverse impact, he added.

According to a planning ministry document, the required fund for the 80 projects would come from the government, Green Climate Fund, development partners, foreign direct investment and the private sector.

At present, the government spends 0.8 percent of the GDP for Delta management projects and programmes. To implement the plan, two percent of the GDP would be required. Bangladesh is likely to get \$2 billion assistance from Green Climate Fund every year.

Besides, about 0.5 percent from the private sector's annual income could be added to the Delta Plan fund.

Coastal, Varendra (Barind) and drought-prone, haor and flood-prone, Chittagong Hill Tracts, riverine and urban are the six areas to be given priority by the Delta Plan.

Due to climate change, the country's agricultural production may be seriously affected. The production of paddy and wheat may decrease by 17 percent and 61 percent.

About 70 percent areas in 16 districts, where poverty rate is very high, are most vulnerable to natural disasters, the planning ministry document mentioned.

To execute the Delta Plan 2100, a high-level Delta Governance Council led by the prime minister would be formed. The planning minister would be its vice-president.

The council would make decisions and give directives for implementing the plan.

Besides, a project selection committee, led by a GED member, would be constituted. The secretaries of the ministries related to the Delta Plan would be committee members, who would select projects and programmes. The committee would also monitor implementation of the projects and programmes.

100 bikers get free helmets

FROM PAGE 16

district police and BRTA officials conducted a drive to check papers and licences of motorcyclists at different roads of the district town.

After the drive on Sunday, Joypurhat's unit of Nirapad Sarak Chai organised and held the programme at Zero Point of Joypurhat at around 12:00pm. Motorcyclists, who were found carrying updated documents during the drive, were invited at the event and presented with gifts for following traffic rules.

Superintendent of Police in Joypurhat Rashidul Hassan was the chiefguest of the event.

Amongst others present were Bedarul Islam Bedin president of

Joypurhat District Bus and Minibus Owners Group and also convener of Joypurhat's Nirapad Sarak Chai; Selim Hossain, officer-in-charge of Joypurhat Sadar Police Station; and Munir Hossain, traffic inspector in Joypurhat.

SP Rashidul handed over helmets to 100 motorcyclists. He also gave each of the bikers a flower and a sapling for carrying valid documents and licences.

Speaking at the event, Bedarul said they organised the programme to raise awareness among people about the importance of valid registration papers, drivers' licences, and the use of helmet for safety, especially for motorcyclists.

"Helmets are a lifesaving necessity", he said.

Rashidul, in his speech, said law enforcement alone is not enough to bring an end to unethical practices on the roads until citizens do not change their mindsets and begin following traffic rules.

He urged the people to cooperate with them.

Aminimal Islam, a biker, was happy to receive a free helmet for carrying his registration papers and licence that he updated from BRTA in Joypurhat. He, however, admitted that he never bought a helmet due to negligence.

"It is an uncommon initiative. I have never seen anything like it! I believe such initiatives will inspire more people to follow traffic rules," he said.

Cop the mastermind

FROM PAGE 1

Police earlier arrested Wahid Sumon, 27, a tenant at the victim's house, and Saber alias Shamim, 43, of Jatrabari area in connection with the murder.

In his confessional statement, Sumon claimed Nur Alam "masterminded" the killing.

On the night of June 24, Sumon, Saber and another person took Yunus to Keraniganj in the pretext of discussing a human trafficking case against him (Yunus). They also assured him that his name would be dropped from the case, according to the statement.

However, there they killed Yunus and looted Tk 300,000 from his possession. They later handed over the money to Nur Alam, police sources said citing the confessional statement.

Nur Alam was closed soon after his name came up in the confessional statement about one and a half months ago, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Shyampur Police Station.

Police recovered Yunus's body from Hasnabad of South Keraniganj on June

25 with several stab marks on his body, which they took to Sir Salimullah Medical College Morgue for an autopsy.

Before retiring about 10 years ago, Yunus had a business of farming equipment in Old Dhaka.

Atikuzzaman, son of Yunus, said three people -- a couple and another woman -- rented a flat of their home at Paschim Dholaipar in January.

Police arrested all the three in mid-January in connection with alleged sex trade, he said.

Police filed a human trafficking case against them and also made Yunus an accused in the case.

A week later, SI Nazrul Islam of Shyampur police who was investigating the human trafficking case, went to their house to arrest Yunus, said Atikuzzaman.

The SI took Tk 5,000 from him and demanded another Tk 1.2 lakh to drop the charges against his father, he alleged.

The family sought two days from the SI to decide on the matter. Later

they decided to deal with the matter legally and managed to get bail for his father within two days.

In the meantime, police submitted the charge sheet in the trafficking case in May, naming Yunus as an accused.

Several days later, Sumon approached Yunus and demanded Tk 5 lakh, saying he had connections in the police who could drop his [Yunus's] name from the trafficking case, Atikuzzaman said.

Yunus shared the matter with his family, but they decided not to give any money.

On June 24, Yunus left home around 10:30pm with some papers, saying he would meet some people to discuss the case he was facing.

His phone was found switched off since midnight. The family filed a general diary about his going missing the next day.

Eventually they identified the body at the morgue.

Contacted last night, SI Nazrul denied taking or demanding any money from the Yunus family.

India boycotts

FROM PAGE 16

end congestion in Male, as a debt trap and accused Yameen of massive corruption in the project.

The exiled leader of the opposition in the Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed, has said China's actions in the Indian Ocean archipelago amounted to a "land grab" and "colonialism", with 80 percent of its debt held by Beijing.

Also known as China-Maldives Friendship Bridge, the bridge was built with, according to Male, a grant of \$116 million by China. Apart from the grant, Beijing also provided \$72 million as loan for the 1.4 km bridge.

The financing of the bridge has sparked fears of Male getting enmeshed further in Chinese debt net.

India has been alarmed by the manner in which the cost of the project shot up in the past few years.

A Delhi-based western diplomat who handles Maldives said even the "official cost of the project" \$200 million was almost thrice that of the estimate prepared by former president Mohamed Nasheed government in 2011.

"Given the lack of transparency and parliamentary scrutiny in government affairs, no one really knows the actual cost of the project ... some people say it may even have crossed \$300 million," he said.

A preliminary survey carried out by overseas experts in 2011, while noting the viability of the project, had estimated a total cost between \$70 million to \$100 million.

The Indian Ocean country of 340,000 people has been on edge since Yameen -- who has jailed or exiled almost all his opponents -- imposed a 45-day state of emergency in February. He even sacked and jailed the country's top judge after the top court ordered to free the opposition leaders including Nasheed.

Maldives is expected to go to polls later in the month.

The US and European Union have expressed deep concern over Yameen's actions, and rights activists have called for sanctions on the president and his aides.

Philippines' Duterte eyes arms deals on Israel trip

AFP, Manila

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday left for a visit to Israel and Jordan, pursuing a pivot away from his nation's long-time reliance on American military hardware and support.

The four-day visit to Israel will be the first by a Philippine leader in more than 60 years of diplomatic ties between the two nations, even though the links between their people go back to Manila's sheltering of Jews during the Holocaust.

Duterte's visit has generated much attention, powered both by his penchant for foul-mouthed statements -- including likening himself to Hitler -- and his internationally condemned drug crackdown that has killed thousands.

Duterte, accompanied by an entourage including soldiers and police, will sit down with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and hold an event with some of the thousands of Filipino migrant workers in Israel.

"We assign great importance to this visit, which symbolises the strong, warm ties between our two peoples," Israel's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Duterte has pivoted the Philippines away from its former colonial master the United States and towards warmer diplomatic and business ties with China and Russia.

The US and Canada have both seen military hardware deals fall apart with the Philippines due to concerns over Duterte's drug war. But so far sales with Israel have gone smoothly.

"(The visit) is for President Duterte to look for an alternative market for... weapons for our armed forces as well as for the police," Henelito Sevilla, an international relations expert at the

University of the Philippines, told AFP.

Israel is among the world's top arms dealers, with nearly 60 percent of its defence exports going to the Asia-Pacific region, according to Israeli defence ministry data.

The Philippines emerged as a significant new customer in 2017 for Israel, with sales of radar and anti-tank equipment worth \$21 million.

Manila says the trip is expected to yield agreements on defence as well as labour, which is one of the Philippines' top exports.

Some 10 million Filipinos work abroad and send home money that is a lifeline for the economy. Manila is keen to sign agreements on protections for the workers.

Although the Philippines has a special bond with Israelis for giving refuge to some 1,300 Jews fleeing the Holocaust, Duterte drew global condemnation for comparing himself to Hitler in 2016.

"Hitler massacred three million Jews. Now there are three million drug addicts (in the Philippines). I'd be happy to slaughter them," he said. Most mainstream historians say six million Jews died in the Holocaust.

Duterte later apologised for his remarks, which he said were aimed at critics who had likened him to the Nazi leader.

Just over a year later the Philippines abstained from a UN vote rebuking the United States for moving its embassy to Jerusalem. Palestinians see the eastern part of the disputed city as the capital of their future state.

Duterte yesterday expressed support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"We shall be guided by our constitution and laws as well as our international commitments in support of efforts and initiatives including the two-state solution," he told reporters.

China culls 38,000 pigs as swine fever spreads

AFP, Beijing

More than 38,000 pigs have been culled across China, state media said yesterday, as the world's largest pork producer scrambles to contain an outbreak of African swine fever.

The disease has been discovered in five Chinese provinces, the official Xinhua news service reported, quoting statistics from the country's ministry of agriculture.

China reported its first case of the disease in August in northeast Liaoning province.

Since then the disease has moved south, with cases discovered as far as 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) away, raising concerns it could infect pig farms across the country.

Although the virus has continued to

spread, a spokesman for the agriculture ministry said it is "generally under control," Xinhua reported.

Last week, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization warned the disease could spread to other parts of Asia.

African swine fever is not harmful to humans but causes haemorrhagic fever in domesticated pigs and wild boar that almost always ends in death within a few days.

There is no antidote or vaccine, and the only known method to prevent the disease from spreading is a mass cull of the infected livestock.

Beijing said an emergency plan had been launched and control measures taken to halt the spread of the disease.

The FAO warned in May of the risk of the spread of African swine fever from Russia.

US moves to scrap

FROM PAGE 16

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools," Trump wrote on Twitter at the beginning of the year.

"They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"

Pakistani leaders disputed the \$33 billion figure, insisting that around half of the money relates to reimbursements, and the prime minister's office accused Trump of ignoring the great sacrifices the country has made to fight extremism.

In March, a senior US official said that Pakistan has "done the bare minimum to appear responsive to our requests," and concerns over a lack of action by Islamabad against militant groups still persist.

LOSS OF US INFLUENCE

The announcement came weeks after Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan took office amid concerns he would remain tolerant of terror groups including the Taliban and the notorious Haqqani network.

Khan has repeatedly blamed Pakistan's participation in the US-led anti-terror campaign for the surge in terrorism on home soil over the last decade and has vowed to rebalance Islamabad's relationship with Washington.

He has also shown a willingness to hold talks with militant groups and sought support from religious hardliners in the run-up to elections last July -- moves that prompted critics to christen him "Taliban Khan".

Some analysts warn there may be no real way to pressure Islamabad and say a suspension in aid could see the US lose crucial influence over Pakistan

which will instead look to other countries for support, particularly its long time ally China.

Despite the provocations, the US does not want to completely rupture its relationship with Pakistan, where anti-American sentiment already runs high.

Washington's footprint in Afghanistan is much smaller than it was at the height of the war, but it needs access to Pakistan's supply lines and airspace.

Nine injured in German protests for and against migrants

AFP, Chemnitz

Nine people were injured Saturday on the sidelines of opposing demonstrations by the far-right and the left in the German city of Chemnitz, which was hit by anti-migrant protests last week.

Chemnitz has been in the spotlight after violent xenophobic protests erupted over the fatal stabbing of a German man, allegedly by a Syrian and an Iraqi last Sunday.

On Saturday, thousands of people answered a joint call by far-right party AfD and Islamophobic PEGIDA street movement to descend once again on the streets.

But an equally large contingent of counter protesters, including Green party and Social Democratic Party MPs, also converged in former communist city to take a stand against racism.